

The Monitor

September - October 2013


Dear Readers,

This is the September-October edition of *The Monitor*. I devoted the past two months to visiting some of the countries around the world where the Jewish community has faced various forms of anti-Semitism. Meeting with Jewish community leaders, NGO leaders and government representatives, I tried to learn about, and convey the U.S. government's concern for rising levels of anti-Semitism.

Please note that I frequently comment on the latest developments around the world on Twitter (see page 10). You can follow me @SEASForman.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our work.

Ira Forman

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Events



*Vibeke Moe, Research Advisor at the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo, shows SE Forman an exhibit on returning to Holocaust victims their human identities.
(photo courtesy of Department of State)*

Travel to Oslo

From September 16-19, I visited Oslo, the first visit to Norway of a U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. Some of the leadership of the small Jewish community in Norway feels the community is vulnerable. Although anti-Semitism in Norway is not as pervasive as some have claimed, there are issues that need to be addressed. Norwegian Jews face both a more classic, racially-based anti-Semitism, as well as politically-based anti-Semitism tied to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Because the Jewish community is so small in Norway, most Norwegians do not have interaction with Jews or Judaism, and many tend to conflate Israel with Jews in general. Many Norwegians do not realize some of their words or actions are anti-Semitic, and some interlocutors told me that at times the “new” anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are used as a cover for more classical racism. Despite some recent anti-Semitic cartoons in the Norwegian print media, some of the leaders of the Jewish community in Norway say the media has been less biased against Israel in recent years. However, in many of my meetings, there was concern about the school system and teachers not recognizing the need to deal with cases of anti-Semitic behavior and lacking training for how to respond.

HDIM and Meetings in Warsaw



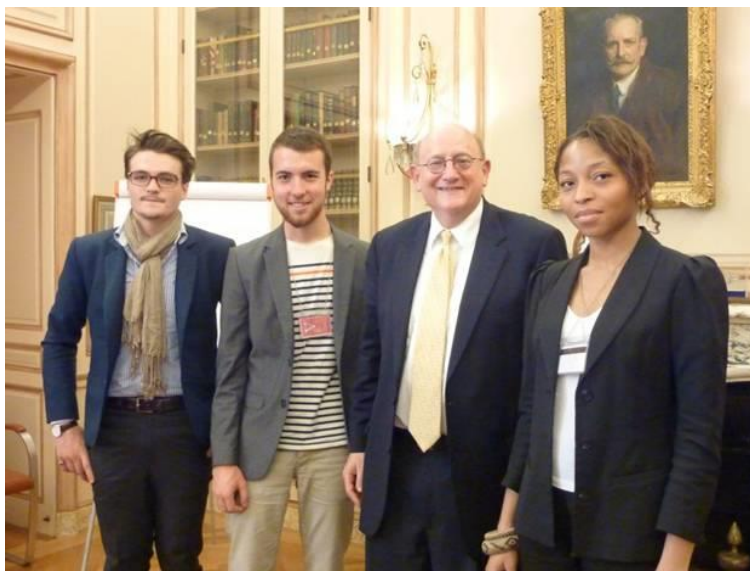
Meeting with NGOs on the margins of the HDIM in Warsaw (photo courtesy of Department of State)

At the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw September 23-25, I delivered the U.S. intervention on tolerance and non-discrimination, participated in bilateral meetings, and met with NGOs tracking anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. While in Poland, I also met with Polish government officials and leaders of the Warsaw Jewish community to discuss the Polish law banning religious slaughter, as well as with NGOs working to improve Polish-Jewish dialogue and track hate crimes.



Addressing HDIM in Warsaw (photo courtesy of Department of State)

Travel to Paris



Meeting with board members of French NGO Coexister, an interfaith youth movement (photo courtesy of Department of State)

I travelled to France September 26-30 to meet with Jewish community leaders, Jewish student and interfaith activists, anti-discrimination organizations, and faith leaders as well as French government officials and UNESCO, to discuss the current state of anti-Semitism and other intolerance in France. I also had a chance to discuss Holocaust education. In Paris, I met with the president of the Council Representative of the Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF), the president of the Jewish Student Union in France, the director of American Jewish Committee (AJC) France, and the director of Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (SPCJ). The SPCJ is the French government's key interlocutor on all issues related to the security of France's Jewish community. We depend on SPCJ data for the Department of State's annual Human Rights and International Religious Freedom reports. I also met the president of the National Office of Vigilance against Anti-Semitism (BNCVA), which also deals with the security of the French Jewish community.

The leaders of the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism ([LICRA](#)), one of the oldest French civil rights NGOs, briefed me on the prevalence of racism and anti-Semitism in France today. Their comments about the rise of anti-Zionism as a cover for anti-Semitism were echoed throughout my meetings in Paris.

Meetings with French Government officials included Prefect Régis Guyot, the Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial task force against anti-Semitism and racism recreated. His role is to ensure the application of France's national action plan against racism and anti-Semitism for the period 2012-2014. I also met Ambassador Patrizianna Sparacino-Thiellay, Special Envoy for Human

Rights and the International Dimension of the Holocaust, including Reparations and Memorial Issues, from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The young leaders of [Coexister](#), an interfaith youth NGO, were particularly inspiring. They use social media and other methods to promote non-political dialogue about religious issues. Some of its members are currently on a [world tour](#), meeting with religious leaders and communities of many different faiths. I hope to meet them in Washington in March 2014 at the end of their tour. Upon their return, they will organize a two-month educational outreach tour/program in France to share some of their experiences and lessons learned.

At the U.S. Embassy, I met with members of the Minority Working Group, comprised of a cross-section of embassy officers who focus their attention and resources on minorities in France. I met with UNESCO's focal point on Holocaust Education.



The Wall of the Righteous pays tribute to the men and women who risked their lives in France to rescue persecuted Jews during the Holocaust (photo courtesy of Department of State)

I especially welcomed the opportunity to meet with the director of the Shoah Memorial Museum, who has actively engaged the museum in Holocaust education. In addition I had the opportunity to attend services and enjoy the hospitality of Rabbi Moshé Sebbag of the Great Synagogue of Paris and Rabbi Olivier Kaufmann of Synagogue Place des Vosges.

Concerns expressed to me in Paris included the spread of anti-Semitism on the internet and Twitter, the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment among youth, particularly among impoverished and uneducated Muslims, and concern about personal safety if a person wears religious garb in Paris, especially in the evening. French comedian Dieudonné's act and public statements include strong anti-Semitism and he has a wide fan base. Finally, UNESCO's Holocaust Education program is underfunded, which will likely result in its termination.



Speaking on rising anti-Semitism at the Tom Lantos Conference in Budapest, October 1-2 (photo courtesy of the Lantos Institute)

Lantos Institute Conference and Meetings in Budapest

On October 1, I gave one of the keynote speeches at the Budapest-based Tom Lantos Institute's conference on Jewish Life and Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Europe, noting that anti-Semitism is on the rise in Europe. In addressing the conference, Deputy Prime Minister Tibor Navracsics declared, "We know that we are responsible for the Holocaust." Minister of Foreign Affairs Janos Martonyi made a similar statement in his closing remarks: "The Holocaust is the biggest national trauma for us. We accept responsibility." These were noteworthy statements, rare in Hungarian public discourse.

While many participants noted that Hungary deserves recognition for its efforts to combat anti-Semitism, Jewish groups emphasized that much more needs to be done. During the conference, I was gratified that the hosts praised the U.S. government for combating anti-Semitism around the world.

While in Hungary, I had a series of meetings with Hungarian officials, members of the Jewish community, and NGO representatives. On October 2, I met with Cardinal Peter Erdő, Archbishop of Budapest and president of the Council of European Bishops Conferences, where we discussed the importance of promoting Catholic-Jewish relations and working together to combat anti-Semitism. During a roundtable hosted by the embassy, there was a consensus among participants that anti-Semitism was on the rise in Hungary. They were quick to note,

however, that while anti-Semitism remains a serious problem, discrimination against Roma is an even greater issue.

Professor Andras Kovacs of the Central European University shared his research on anti-Semitism with me. According to his polling data, anti-Semitism tends to spike during Hungarian election years. His research also shows that the level of anti-Semitic opinion in Poland and Hungary is significantly higher than in other European countries.

State Secretary Doncsev informed me that Hungarian educators plan to follow the successful model of German educators in teaching about Hungary's role in the Holocaust. The new curriculum is projected to include a more thorough background on Jewish contributions to Hungarian society through the ages.



The Jozsefvarosi train station in Budapest, site of deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1944 (photo courtesy of Department of State)

In Budapest, as I toured the Holocaust museum and the Jozsefvarosi train station, I was struck anew with the senseless and tragic loss of so many lives. History cannot be forgotten. During my meetings with NGO representatives and religious leaders, they continued to advocate for a more thorough approach to Holocaust education.

"Indonesian Lullaby" Event Commemorates Holocaust Survivor and His Indonesian Rescuers

On October 28, John Taylor, a Foreign Service Officer who has served in Indonesia and is a member of the SEAS team, represented the Department at a special program at the Indonesian Embassy. Hosted by Indonesian Ambassador Dino Patti Djalal, the evening, "Indonesian Lullaby: Compassion in a Time of Hate," honored Dr. Alfred Munzer and his rescuers, Tola Manda and Mina Saina, the Indonesian father and nanny who hid him and protected him as an infant during the Holocaust. After World War II, Dr. Munzer was reunited with his Dutch

mother, who had survived Auschwitz. Sadly, his father and two older sisters were killed in the camps. The program also included a screening of the trailer for an upcoming documentary film which will focus not only on Dr. Munzer's survival, but also on a trip he made to Indonesia to tell this remarkable story. His Indonesian foster father and nanny were honored in 2003 as Righteous Among the Gentiles. In addition, Temple University Dialogue Institute's Dr. Racelle Weiman spoke about the teacher training project related to the documentary.



Dr. Munzer with Indonesian Ambassador Dino Patti Djalal (photo courtesy of the Embassy of Indonesia)

At the Department of State

Quarterly Meeting with Jewish Organizations

Our office hosted my first quarterly meeting Wednesday, September 11 to report on my recent overseas trips and U.S. meetings, and to explore how we can work together to further our mutual goals. Fifteen colleagues representing all major Jewish organizations shared their concerns about anti-Semitism, particularly in Hungary, Greece, Ukraine and Scandinavia, and the general security of Jewish communities around the world. I shared my priorities, learned from the representatives of Jewish organizations about their priorities, and pledged to work closely with these stakeholders.



Meeting with Moroccan Ambassador at Large for Jewish Affairs

DRL Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Kari Johnstone and I met with Serge Berdugo, Moroccan Ambassador at Large of His Majesty the King of Morocco and President of the Moroccan Jewish Community to discuss the concerns and wellbeing of the Jewish community in Morocco. Our conversation covered a broad range of issues, including the rehabilitation of Jewish cemeteries.

Training

Foreign Service Institute

Anti-Semitism EUR Team Leader Stacy Bernard-Davis presented a training module on anti-Semitism on October 24 as part of a week-long course on Human Rights to State Department officers and locally employed staff from Washington and missions around the world.

Staff Changes

Foreign Service Officer Leanne Cannon recently joined the Department's International Religious Freedom office and jumped right into supporting the SEAS team, accompanying me on my September trip to Norway and contributing to the 2013 Human Rights Reports drafting process. Leanne joins us after serving at the U.S. Embassy in Bamako, Mali and the U.S. Consulate General in Monterrey, Mexico. Foreign Service Officer Olivia Hilton transitioned off the team October 31. We look forward to welcoming Foreign Service Officer Nancy Cooper to the team in November.

Online Outreach

[Facebook.com/StateDRL](https://www.facebook.com/StateDRL)



Please click on the above hyperlink to connect to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Facebook page. The “Like” button is at the top of the page and has a thumbs-up symbol. The symbol disappears once you have “Liked” the page.

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I also encourage all of you to visit our page <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/seas/index.htm> on the Department of State's website. You can also connect via the homepage of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl> and then click on "Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism" in the left vertical column. Here you will find information about our office, as well as remarks, press releases, past issues of *The Monitor*, and photos.

HumanRights.gov



You can also visit [HumanRights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov), which is the U.S. government's official website for international human rights related information.

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